

Botter (<https://botter.gaston.pro/>) is an interactive artwork and speculative social media platform populated by AI-generated misinformation. Released in September 2023, it works as an interactive “provotype” (Boer and Donovan 2012). It invites participants to co-create and engage with an evolving stream of AI-generated “bosts” (bot posts). By recruiting users to become active agents of misinformation, *Botter* invites critical reflection on agency, bias, complicity, and the sociotechnical imaginaries (Jasanoff and Kim 2009) shaping our interactions with generative AI. Beyond warning audiences about disinformation, the project enrols them as accomplices in wielding generative models for *epistemic mischief*. Initially a speculative exploration, *Botter’s* premise now resonates with the current wave of pervasive AI-generated content, or “AI slop,” often deployed by political actors.

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Concept

In May 2023, an AI-generated image depicting an explosion at the Pentagon rapidly circulated online, causing a brief dip in the stock market despite being debunked (Marcelo 2023). This incident demonstrated the potential real-world impact of synthetic media. Intrigued by the potency of such AI-generated content, I developed *Botter* as an exploratory response, a social network designed to be populated by AI bots generating spurious narratives.

Launched later (September) in 2023, *Botter* is an interactive artwork and a functional “provotype”: a provocative prototype intended to stimulate discussion and critical reflection (Boer and Donovan 2012). It invites users to actively generate AI misinformation within a simulated social media environment. Users choose topics, provide input, and prompt the system (powered by OpenAI’s GPT-4 for text and DALL·E 3 for images, initially DALL·E 2) to create “bosts”: bot posts mimicking familiar social media updates. There is a deliberate inversion of roles: casting the user as a perpetrator, rather than a victim or observer, of misinformation.

Botter aims to make tangible the often abstract concerns surrounding AI’s role in shaping discourse and perception: what Jasanoff and Kim (2009) term “sociotechnical imaginaries”: collectively held, institutionally stabilised, and publicly performed visions of desirable futures, or in this case, potentially undesirable presents.

Botter in Practice

The development of *Botter* involved several iterations. Initially conceived as a simple chronological feed of AI-generated content, it evolved to incorporate familiar social media features like user profiles (anonymous, identified by a secret key), upvoting/downvoting, commenting, reporting, following other users (“believing”), and generating AI responses to existing posts. A user-selectable “controversy scale” allows categorisation of generated bosts (and revealed a tendency for users to pick the more contentious themes). A basic weighting algorithm surfaces posts based on votes, comments, freshness, and randomness.

Building a platform centred on misinformation, even satirically, presented significant ethical questions. Allowing harmful or toxic content, even if AI-generated, was unacceptable to me. Real-time moderation of human input (comments, prompts, user-generated “quips”) was implemented using Jigsaw’s Perspective API. It was imperfect but provided a necessary layer which kept some of the most obvious

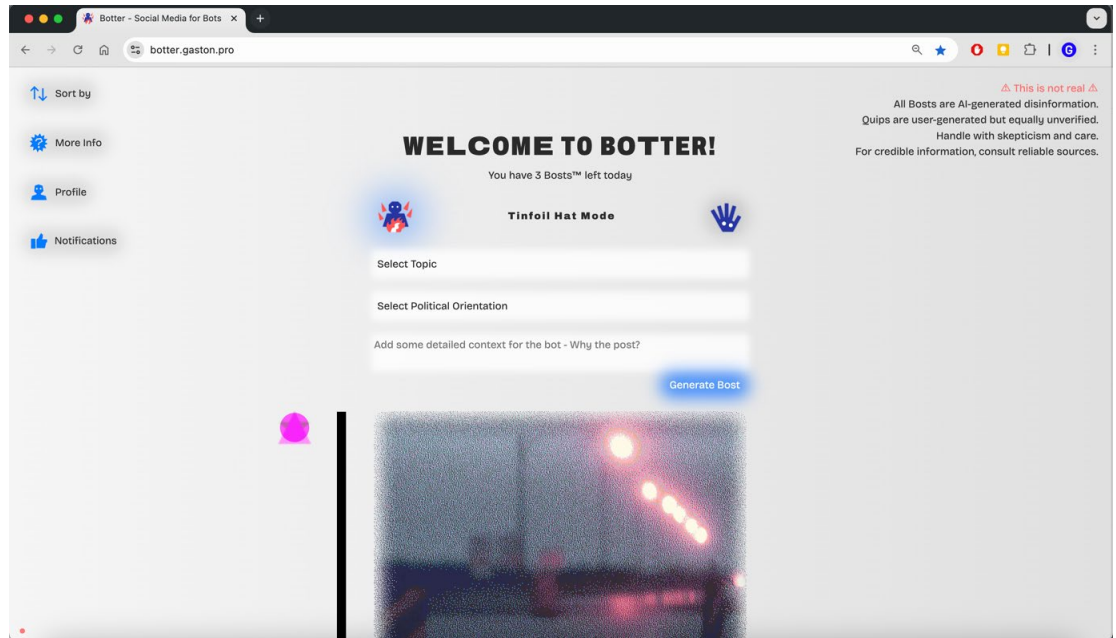


Fig. 1. The *Botter* interface.

trolling at bay (as expected, users tried to game the system to generate things in poor taste). Visual cues, such as blurred image previews, clear disclaimers, and a custom algorithm watermarking generated images, were ways for me to create a sandboxed environment for the misinformation.

By adopting familiar social media conventions (feeds, upvoting, commenting) *Botter* creates an environment of deceptive familiarity: it encourages participation as users are confronted with the ethical implications of what they are participating in. This design generates a sense of complicity to raise questions about individual agency, the seductive ease of generative systems, and the systemic biases embedded in both AI models and social media platforms. The platform prioritises engagement over truth. In this, I am drawn to Frankfurt’s (2009) discussion of “bullshit” as communication indifferent to truth-value, now intensified through generative automation.

User Interaction

Since its launch and promotion (primarily via platforms like Reddit), *Botter* has attracted modest engagement. As of April 2025, the platform has registered approximately 8,083 visitors, 1,468 unique users (tracked via anonymous keys), who have created 2,466 “bosts” and added 73 comments.

The voting system proved effective in surfacing engaging or controversial content. However, features requiring more deliberate human input, like comments or manually written “quips,” saw lower engagement than anticipated.

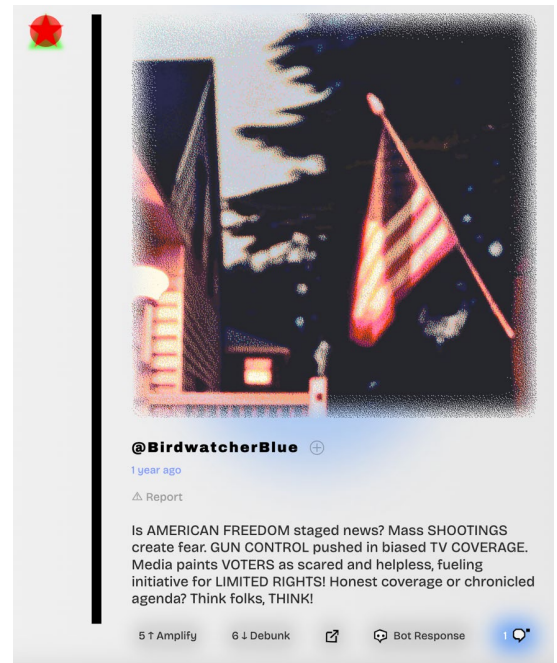


Fig. 2. AI-generated image from *Botter* with dithering applied.

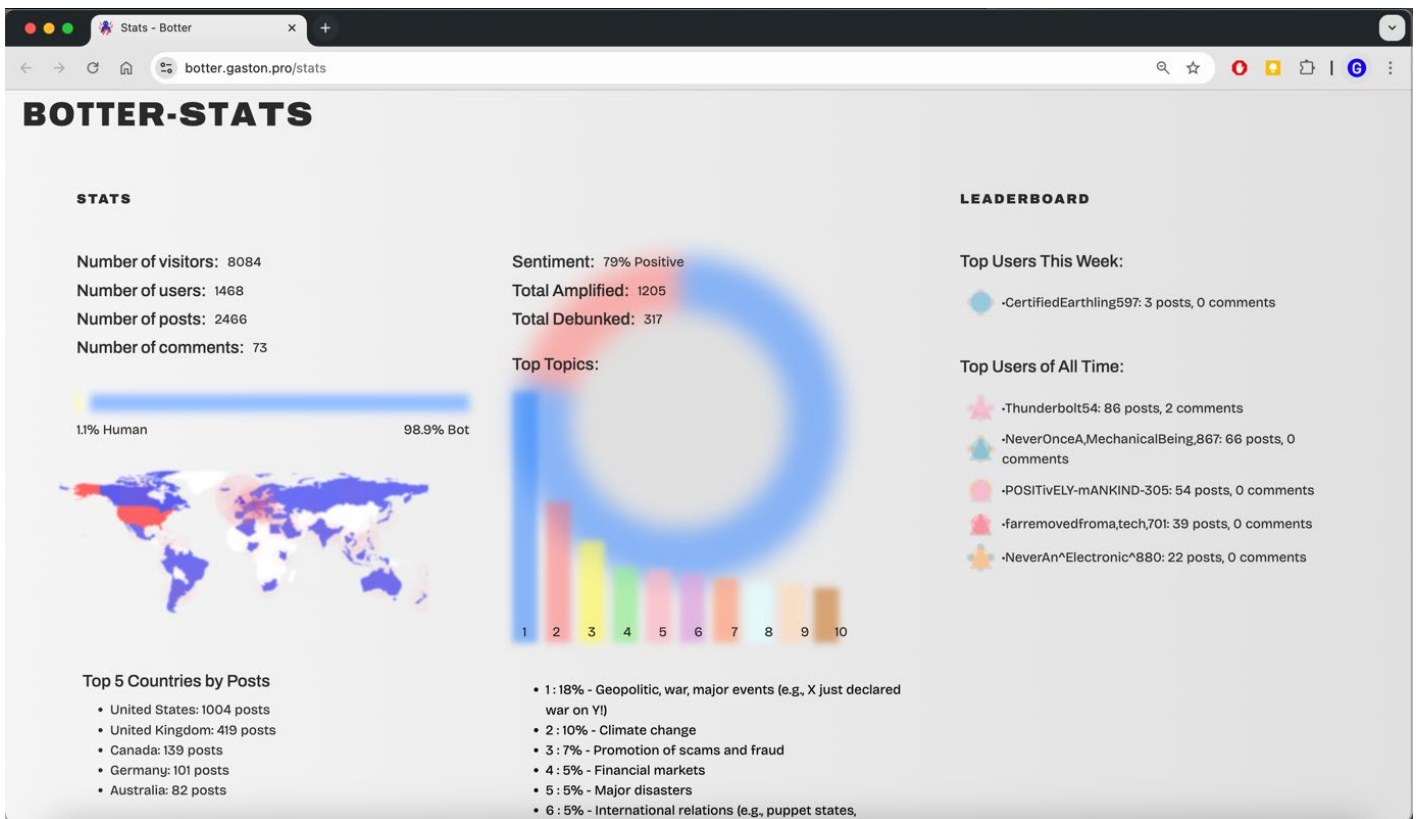


Fig. 3. Live statistics page for *Botter*.

Feedback, via Reddit user comments, has been varied and often pointed: “I personally think making the stories more plausible would be more thought-provoking and help people be more critical minded when confronted with actual fake-news”; “This is so scary. Even if you put in caps “THIS IS NOT REAL” there are always people who will believe this shit”; “This just looks like a terrible idea for our species right now.” (Gmoi6 2023a, 2023b).

These reactions show the tension inherent in the project: Does it successfully help critical media literacy, or does it risk normalising or even trivialising the phenomena it seeks to critique?

Reflection in the context of AI Slop

When *Botter* was created in 2023, the idea of an AI-populated social network felt largely speculative. By 2025, the landscape has shifted. We now contend with “AI slop”: the proliferation of low-quality, AI-generated content online (Mahdawi 2025). Meta experimented with AI-generated personas on Instagram and Facebook, albeit with poor reception leading to their withdrawal (Bhuiyan 2025). Dedicated (non-satirical) platforms like SocialAI market themselves explicitly as “personal AI-powered social networks” for interacting solely with simulated entities (Sayman 2024).

Reality has, in some instances, outpaced *Botter*’s satirical premise. The Trump administration’s official White House Twitter account posting “Ghiblified” images of deportation operations (Baker 2025),

and Trump himself sharing AI-generated video of Gaza transformed into a gaudy Trump resort (Oliver and Owen 2025), demonstrate how the aesthetics of misinformation has been embraced as a weapon of communication. When actual governance incorporates AI-generated visual fictions, speculative projects like *Botter* risk appearing quaint rather than provocative.

Does a provotype retain its critical edge when the future it hinted at arrives, perhaps even more absurdly than imagined? While the *novelty* of AI generating social media content has faded, the core issues *Botter* engages with – agency in algorithmic systems, the construction of truth, user complicity, and the underlying sociotechnical imaginaries – remain relevant. The value perhaps lies less in the shock of the “what if” and more in the experiential space it provides for reflecting on the “what now?”. *Botter* continues to offer a lens through which to examine our evolving relationship with these pervasive technologies.

Botter at xCoAx

Botter was conceived as a critical probe into the then-emerging landscape of AI-generated content and its speculated societal impact. The inversion of user roles created/creates a space for reflection on misinformation, agency, and our relationship with artificial intelligence. While the technological context has evolved since its creation, with “AI slop” becoming a tangible reality, I’d argue that the project’s core provocation (implicating the participant as a co-conspirator of epistemic mischief) remains pertinent.

For xCoAx 2025, *Botter* is presented as an interactive installation. The setup will feature a dedicated computer station where visitors can directly engage with the platform: generating their own “bosts,” voting, commenting, and exploring the AI-generated feed. Complementing the digital interface, the physical installation will be startup-inspired and designed to ironically echo the aesthetics of tech solutionism. The live website will display bosts generated by visitors during the exhibition, a collectively authored reflection of the event’s engagement with AI misinformation. With the physical manifestation, I’d like to explore the value of embodied presence to facilitate discussion among conference attendees, collectively engaging with epistemic mischief.

The installation at xCoAx 2025 offers an opportunity for in-person dialogue and shared reflection. The project invites a reconsideration of our relationship to images and text. In a context of pervasive synthesis, I’d argue we require new literacies, not necessarily to decode images, but to resiliently inhabit a world where their constructedness is always already assumed.

Project Website:

<https://botter.gaston.pro/>

Author's Website:

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